

PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY OF PUNJAB

FAFEN PARLIAMENT MONITOR

26th SESSION

January 23 - February 9, 2017



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Session
Number

26

Working
Days

18

Actual
Sittings

14

Working
Hours

39

Hours & 45 Minutes

PUNJAB ASSEMBLY FACES QUORUM SYNDROME, HASTY LEGISLATION

■ Chief Minister Absent from Proceedings Since Last Four Sessions

Punjab Assembly's 26th session was marked by lack of quorum, hasty legislation and treasury's disinterest in lawmakers' adjournment motions on public importance matters. The opposition lawmakers pointed out the absence of quorum 17 times during the session that spanned over 14 sittings. Three sittings were adjourned and four had to be suspended for want of quorum. The official attendance statistics show that maximum attendance during at least six sittings was less than the quorum (one fourth of total membership i.e. 93 members). Among the key parliamentary figures, the Chief Minister (Leader of the House) remained absent throughout the session while Speaker, Deputy Speaker and the Leader of the Opposition attended 14, six and 13 sittings respectively.

The treasury managed to get passed seven of its legislative proposals during the session. Among the passed bills, the Punjab Civil Administration Bill, 2017, the Punjab Drugs (Amendment) Bill, 2017 and the Punjab Local Government (Amendment) Bill, 2017 were introduced during the same session. The Local Government (Amendment) Bill was passed only two days after its introduction in the House.

The session also witnessed adoption of 13 resolutions and presentation of eight committee reports. Meanwhile, the lawmakers asked 408 questions, submitted nine Calling Attention Notices (CANs) and brought 33 Adjournment Motions (AMs) on the agenda. Eleven of

the lawmakers' questions went unanswered while majority of Starred Questions (56%) were not discussed on the floor of the House. All CANs were addressed but all AMs except one remained unaddressed till the prorogation of the session. Besides these interventions, the government also included six general discussions on performance of various government departments and ministries in the Assembly's formal business. Two of these discussions could not take place while the four discussions consumed six hours and 50 minutes.

As many as 13 instances of protests or walkouts were observed during the session. These protests or walkouts were staged to show lawmakers' concerns over issues like Panama Leaks controversy, allocation of development funds, passage of Punjab Civil Administration Bill, 2017, treasury and chair's alleged discrimination against opposition's agenda and Hafiz Saeed's detention.

Duration and Attendance

The 25th session of the Punjab Assembly was the longest session of ongoing (fourth) parliamentary year. The session spanned over 18 Working Days, however, it held 14 sittings in actual and met for 37 hours and 20 minutes cumulatively. Like previous sessions, none of the sittings during reporting session could commence on its scheduled time. On average, each sitting was delayed by an hour and 19 minutes. The maximum delay a sitting witnessed

KEY MEMBERS ATTENDANCE



Rana Muhammad Iqbal
SPEAKER

14/14

Presiding Time (hh:mm)

32:23

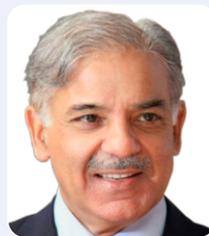


Sardar Sher Ali Gorchani
DEPUTY SPEAKER

6/14

Presiding Time (hh:mm)

2:37



Mian Shahbaz Sharif
CHIEF MINISTER

0/14

Attended Time (hh:mm)

0:00



Mian Mehmood-ur-Rashid
LEADER OF OPPOSITION

13/14

Attended Time (hh:mm)

14:30

PARLIAMENTARY LEADERS ATTENDANCE



S. Waseem Akhtar



JI

8/14



Muhammad Sibtain Khan



PTI

6/14



Ghulam Murtaza



PML-Z

3/14



Sardar Shahab-ud-Din



PPPP

2/14



S. Iftikhar Gillani



BNAP

0/14



Ch Moonis Elahi



PML

0/14



Bilal Asghar Warrach



PNML

0/14

Suspension

2

Hours & 57 Minutes

Members at Outset
(Average)

15

present

Members at End
(Average)

47

present

Minority Members
(Average)

5

present

was an hour and 59 minutes while the minimum was 47 minutes. Each sitting, on average, continued for two hours and 40 minutes. The longest sitting continued for four hours and nine minutes while the shortest ended in an hour and 33 minutes. The last four sittings faced suspension of proceedings due to lack of quorum. Seven percent of the session (two hours and 57 minutes) was consumed in these suspensions.

The Leader of the House did not attend any sitting of the session. It is the fourth consecutive session that the Chief Minister has not been attending. The Leader of the Opposition attended 13 sittings and spent 14 hours and 30 minutes (36% of session) in the House. The Speaker was present throughout the session and presided over 32 hours and 23 minutes (81%) of the proceedings. The Deputy Speaker attended six sittings and chaired the proceedings for two hours and 37 minutes while a member of Panel of Chairpersons also presided over for two hours and 20 minutes. The sole lawmaker of JI was most regular among other leaders of parliamentary parties. He attended eight sittings followed by leaders of PTI, PML-Z and PPPP who were present in six, three and two sittings respectively.

The Punjab Assembly Secretariat shares the record of the attendance of lawmakers on its website; however, this does not include attendance record of the Chief Minister, Provincial Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries. As per official attendance records, on average, 91 lawmakers attended each sitting. The maximum attendance was 106 recorded in second last sitting while the minimum was 60. FAFEN also conducts headcount at onset and adjournment of each sitting. According to these headcounts, only 15 lawmakers were observed to be present at the outset and 47 at the adjournment of a sitting on average. The maximum attendance of lawmakers at the outset was recorded 27 and the minimum five. Similarly, the maximum presence at the adjournment of sitting was 105 and minimum six.

Legislation

The Punjab Assembly passed six government bills during the session, while three legislative proposals, including two Private Members' bills, were referred to the relevant standing committees following their introduction. Three of the bills passed by the Assembly were introduced during the same session.

Passed Bills

- *The Punjab Urban Immovable Property Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2016 (Bill No.47 of 2016)*

The bill authorizes government to determine the deadline for unmovable property tax-related payments.

- *The Punjab Urban Immovable Property Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2016 (Bill No.48 of 2016)*

The bill seeks to harmonize the definition of the term "urban area" and provisions of property tax in the Punjab Urban Immovable Property Tax Act, 1958 with the provisions in the Punjab Local Government Act 2013.

- *The Punjab Civil Administration Bill, 2017*

The bill provides for institutionalization of civil administration by reviving the office of Deputy Commissioners.

- *The Punjab Local Government (Amendment) Bill, 2017*

The bill provides for removal of the bar of double membership in case of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chairman and Vice Chairman, omission of provisions regarding the dissolution of the local governments and empowering the Deputy Mayor or Vice Chairman of a local government to preside over the meetings of the local government.

- *The Punjab Drugs (Amendment) Bill, 2017*

7

Government Bills Passed

1

Government Bills Introduced

2

Private Members' Bills Introduced

13

Resolutions Adopted

The bill includes provisions regarding constitution of drug monitoring teams, drug testing laboratories and enhancing the punishments for offences relating to substandard drugs.

- *The Punjab Land Records Authority Bill, 2016*

The bill provides for the establishment of the Punjab Land Records Authority for reform and modernization of the system of land records

- *The University Of Home Economics Lahore Bill, 2016*

The bill provides for the establishment of University of Home Economics Lahore.

Introduced Bills

Government Bill

- *The Punjab Private Educational Institutions (Promotion and Regulation) (Amendment) Ordinance, 2017*

The bill provides for the procedure and rate of increase in the fees of private schools.

Private Members' Bills

- *The Punjab Land Preservation (Amendment) Bill, 2016*

The bill provides for the increase in the amount of fine imposed under the Punjab Land Preservation Act, 1900 from one hundred to ten thousand rupees.

- *The Punjab Animals Slaughter Control (Amendment) Bill, 2016*

The bill seeks to bring the definition of slaughter in conformity with the provisions of Islamic Laws.

Resolutions

The House adopted 13 resolutions, including three for extension of ordinances. The remaining resolutions were on matters of public importance and nine of them were sponsored by

Private Members while one was a supplementary resolution on Kashmir Day.

The House granted 90 days' extension to the Punjab Land Records Authority Ordinance 2016, the Punjab Urban Immovable Property Tax (Amendment) Ordinance 2016 and the Punjab Civil Administration Ordinance 2016. A PTI lawmaker's resolution for disapproval of the Punjab Civil Administration Ordinance 2016 was also surfaced on Orders of the Day but the House rejected the motion seeking leave to move the resolution.

The public importance resolutions related to the subjects of water pollution, Hindi-dubbed cartoon programs, compulsory education of Holy Quran, renaming Eye Hospital Lahore, sale of substandard milk, development of an official website on Quaid-e-Azam, adverse impact of video game centers on children, separate service roads for motorcyclists and reservation of protest area in Lahore. These resolutions made recommendations to Federal and Punjab governments on abovementioned subjects.

A resolution demanding removal of hate speech from syllabus was withdrawn by the mover after a minister's statement on the subject. Furthermore, five Private Members' resolutions were kept pending due to the absence of their movers or on treasury's advice.

Committee Reports/Government Papers

Various standing committees of the Punjab Assembly presented their reports on seven bills and 11 Privilege Motions which were referred to them by the House. The government also laid four statutory reports. Moreover, sixteen committees were granted extension for presentation of their reports.

General Discussions

The government included in the Orders of the Day six general discussions on health, agriculture, food, Annual Report of Punjab Bait-ul-Maal 2012, Annual

33

Adjournment
Motions Submitted

9

Calling Attention
Notices

286

Starred
Questions

122

Unstarred
Questions

Report of Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) for 2012-2013 and Annual Activity Reports of Faisalabad, Multan, Gujranwala and Rawalpindi Development Authorities, and Parks & Horticulture Authority Lahore. However, only four of these discussions took place. The discussion on health continued for four hours and 53 minutes and 31 lawmakers participated in it. The discussion on agriculture consumed 16 minutes and two lawmakers took part in it. Similarly, three lawmakers took part in the discussion on TEVTA performance consuming 27 minutes while nine lawmakers participated in discussion on food that lasted for an hour and 14 minutes.

Adjournment Motions

The lawmakers submitted 33 Adjournment Motions on issues of public importance during the reporting session. Only one of these motions was responded to by the treasury and the remaining were kept pending till the prorogation of the session. The lawmakers highlighted the issues related to wheat subsidy fraud, illegal kidney transplant, medicine shortage, lack of ambulances, inflation in meat prices, corruption, land grabbing, poor conditions of public education sector, illegal travel companies, narcotics sale, substandard food items, adulterated milk, gambling points in Jhelum, water pollution, parking issues of Lahore, political interference in police affairs, violation of one dish policy and writing off loans of influential persons. Minister for Law & Parliamentary Affairs made statement on loan write-off issue alone.

Calling Attention Notices

The lawmakers belonging to PTI, PML-N, PML and an Independent member submitted nine Calling Attention Notices (CANs) to draw the attention of the government on law and order situation in the province. All of these notices were taken up and Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs made statements on them. The lawmakers highlighted the incidents of murders and dacoity through these CANs.

Questions

A total of 408 Questions (286 Starred and 122 Unstarred) were admitted for answers during the reporting session. The Rules of Procedure require both oral and written answers for Starred Question and only written answers for Unstarred Questions. Of 286 Starred Questions, 124 were taken up for oral answers while 82 Starred Questions were disposed of due to the absence of movers and 68 others were deferred. The lawmakers also asked 303 Supplementary Questions for further elucidation of Starred Questions. As many as 11 questions (10 Starred and one Unstarred) were not replied in writing. These unanswered questions were asked from the Transport Department.

These questions were directed to 22 ministries and departments of the provincial government. The Ministry of Local Government & Community Development received more questions (57) than any other ministry whereas the departments of Specialized Healthcare & Medical Education and School Education received 53 and 51 questions, respectively.

Zero Hour

The House referred two Zero Hour notices to the relevant standing committees while three more remained pending. These notices highlighted the killings due to poisonous liquor, sale of adulterated milk, re-examination of Sheikh Zayed Graduate Institute's students, financial embezzlement in health department and non-functional Basic Health Unit in Jhelum.

Privilege Motions

Two lawmakers of PTI and PML-N each submitted Privilege Motions against public servants for misbehaving with, accusing of or detaining respective lawmakers. Two motions submitted by PTI lawmakers were disposed of while a PML-N lawmaker's motion was sent to the relevant committee. Moreover, the Privilege Motion of another PML-N legislator was kept pending on the

8

Committee
Reports Presented

4

Privilege
Motion

117

Points of Order

13

Walkouts/Protests

request of the government.

Points of Order

The lawmakers raised 117 Points of Order (POs) consuming two hours and two minutes (about five percent of the proceedings' time). Most of the POs were related with the constituency matters, political developments and current affairs instead of the business of the House.

Quorum

Several sittings of the reporting session faced quorum issue. The opposition lawmakers identified the absence of quorum 17 times during the session. Out of these, three sittings were adjourned and four times, the proceedings were suspended due to lack of quorum. The quorum-related suspension consumed two hours and 57 minutes of the session. On remaining 10 occasions, the quorum was completed after bells were rung for five

minutes.

Protests

As many as 13 instances of protests or walkouts were witnessed during the 26th session. Nine of these instances involved all opposition parties. The remaining protests or walkouts were staged by individual lawmakers belonging to JI and PML-N or just parliamentary group of PTI. A treasury lawmaker also staged walkout for not getting permission to speak on a Point of Order. The opposition lawmakers protested to show concerns over Panama Leaks controversy, unavailability of Zakat funds to hospitals in South Punjab, absence of relevant secretaries during Question Hour, Chair's discrimination against opposition, allocation of development funds to treasury MNAs, loan waive-offs, passage of Punjab Civil Administration Bill, 2017, detention of Hafiz Saeed and disqualification reference against Chief Minister.

Sr.	Standing Committee	Subject of Report	Status
1	Excise & Taxation	The Punjab Urban Immovable Property Tax (Amendment) Bill 2016 (Bill No. 47 of 2016)	Presented
2	Excise & Taxation	The Punjab Urban Immovable Property Tax (Amendment) Bill 2016 (Bill No. 48 of 2016)	Presented
3	Revenue, Relief & Consolidation	The Punjab Land Records Authority Bill 2016 (Bill No. 46 of 2016)	Presented
4	Education	The University of Home Economics Lahore Bill 2016 (Bill No. 38 of 2016)	Presented
5	Services & General Administration	The Punjab Civil Administration Bill 2017 (Bill No. 1 of 2017)	Presented
6	Privileges	Privileges Motions No. 17 for the year 2015, 2,5,15,21,22,23,24,28,37 and 42 for the year 2016	Presented
7	Health	The Punjab Drugs (Amendment) Bill 2017 (Bill No. 2 of 2017)	Presented
8	Local Government & Community Development	The Punjab Local Government (Amendment) Bill 2017 (Bill No. 6 of 2017)	Presented

ABOUT FAFEN

- FAFEN is one of the most credible networks of civil society organizations working for strengthening citizens' voice and accountability in Pakistan since 2006.
- FAFEN has harnessed information technology for real-time monitoring, facilitation and technical backstopping of partners for effective and result-based program delivery.
- FAFEN is the only civil society group to have been invited by the Judicial Commission to present the evidence of illegalities and irregularities documented through the course of General Elections 2013 Observation. The systemic and procedural issues identified by FAFEN have been acknowledged by the commission in its detailed findings.
- FAFEN's recommendations for electoral reforms have contributed to the work of Parliamentary Committee for Electoral Reforms.
- FAFEN's advocacy for parliamentary transparency, accountability and reforms has shaped public discourse on parliamentary reforms. Improved citizens' access to parliamentary information including daily public release of parliamentarians' attendance records can be directly attributed to FAFEN's work.
- FAFEN deployed 18,000 and 40,000 non-partisan and trained observers for the systematic observation of general election 2008 and 2013, respectively, largest citizens' observation ever undertaken in Pakistan.
- FAFEN's evidence and recommendations for reforms have improved the quality of public and political discourse on elections, its issues and need for reforms. Leading political parties and media houses extensively use FAFEN's election findings and analysis to build a case for reforms.
- With more than 17,900 followers on Twitter and around 96,200 on Facebook, FAFEN is considered one of the most reliable sources of electoral and parliamentary information in the country.

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This report is based on direct observation of the proceedings of the Punjab Assembly conducted by PATTAN Development Organization – a member organization of FAFEN. Every effort has been made to keep this report, which deals with on-floor performance of the Members, accurate and comprehensive. Errors and omissions are excepted.